

PERALTA HACIENDA HISTORICAL PARK

by Madeline Horn

AN ARTS AND EDUCATION HUB

Peralta Hacienda Historical Park is a six-acre City of Oakland park containing the 1870 Antonio Peralta House, indoor and outdoor historical exhibits,



community garden, native plant garden, recreational and activity areas and a nature area where Peralta Creek meanders through alders and redwoods.

The park is an arts and education hub and a regional center for arts-based historical inquiry and discovery for the Fruitvale neighborhood of Oakland. Peralta Hacienda once served as the headquarters of Rancho San Antonio, covering 45,000-acres where seven modern cities now stand, including all of Oakland and Berkeley. Today the park stands at the geographical center of Oakland, in the diverse low-income community of Fruitvale. Public programs at the park reach out to both the community base and the wider public, breaking new ground for a museum's role in the community.

MANY CULTURES

The mission of Friends of Peralta Hacienda Historical Park (Friends) is to promote understanding, historical healing, and community amid change and diversity. We present and interpret the untold history of the Peralta rancho and the stories of Fruitvale community today, giving voice to the many cultures that have created – and are still transforming – California. Friends of Peralta Hacienda Historical Park operates the site, offering tours, events and community programs, and developing exhibits and publications.

We fulfill our mission by providing a variety of core arts programs, including community events, guided tours, community after school programs, and

exhibits showcasing local artists work to the public. Our free monthly arts and performance series features neighborhood cultures and artists through performances, communal banquets, hands-on history activities, art activities, and guided tours of museum exhibits. Our host program professionally trains youth interns and community volunteers to lead tours that integrate their personal stories into the tour narrative. In our education programs youth and elders create art based on their own stories and cross cultural encounters, fostering inter-generational appreciation for the arts. They practice culinary arts, crafts, gardening, and filmmaking.

Current Exhibit

Ongoing collaboration with Laotian Mien immigrants has led to our current exhibit.

Embroidering Our Lives: Mien Women at Peralta Hacienda

features the beautiful embroidery, photos, films, and stories of the Laotian Mien traditional artists who are a vibrant part of the Fruitvale



community. Mien women participate at Peralta Hacienda through mentoring diverse neighborhood youth in Mien gardening and embroidery techniques. Another result of this cross-cultural collaboration, ***Grow, Cook & Celebrate: A Community Recipe Book*** was produced through the collaborative effort of Mien elders and African American youth. The book features the family recipes of community members. Mien elders and neighborhood African American youth formed relationships over time in which they embroidered, gardened, and harvested and prepared food together for monthly community banquets at Peralta Hacienda. Sharing traditional arts has also helped resolve neighborhood conflicts once endemic at the site between African American youth and Mien elders, replacing it with friendships and

artistic exchange. Youth learn about the Mien, and about themselves.

FILMMAKING PROGRAMS

Funding from the California Arts Council's Creating Public Value Program (CPV) allowed us to complete two exciting collaborative filmmaking programs with the community this year, Project S.O.S.: Sharing Oakland's Stories, and the Mien Digital Stories Project.

In the Mien Digital Stories Project, youth and female Laotian Mien Elders created five short films showing how the practice of their traditional art forms, including the culinary arts, highly developed and ritualized organic gardening techniques and embroidery physically, emotionally, and spiritually nourishes the elders. The films explore how traditional arts help these women to find reconciliation after the tragedies they experienced in their war-torn lives.

Project S.O.S.: Sharing Oakland's Stories gave Oakland middle and high school youth the



opportunity to become filmmakers of their own digital stories. The program culminated in the creation of

17 short autobiographical films. Students communicated important personal experiences through creation of their digital films while gaining leadership, teamwork, filmmaking, and editing skills. Class sessions resembled professional film sets with students assigned to distinct roles such as cameraperson, director, actor, soundperson, and crew. In August 2009, the completed films were screened for a 200-person audience at a Peralta House event. The screening was followed by a discussion facilitated by community leader Jose Arredondo in which students reflected on their experiences growing up in Oakland.

CPV funding strengthened Friends' ability to deliver excellent filmmaking programs for youth and community elders. We will use this new capacity in our collaboration with California College of the Arts' Center for Art and Public Life this spring, when we will offer free after school art classes to Oakland youth, partnering them with mentors from California College of the Arts. Students will meet once a week at Peralta Hacienda Historical Park to participate in video arts, drawing, painting, and animation projects with their mentors.

The Fruitvale community has been Oakland's receiving ground for immigrants since the earliest times. With its high percentage of children and youth, this diversity and age mix creates not only cultural richness, but also social tensions. Our



programs address them by providing activities for youth and settings for intergenerational cross-cultural communication. Friends develops programs with community input to meet the needs of the neighborhood. Through youth video programs, university art student mentoring, and intergenerational cross-cultural gardening and culinary programs, Peralta Hacienda Historical Park strives to promote understanding, historical healing and community amid changes and diversity.

All photos by Nina Egert

[Peralta Hacienda Historical Park](#) receives funding from the California Arts Council's [Creating Public Value Program \(CPV\)](#). Lucero Arellano manages the CPV Program, which supports arts organizations in rural or underserved communities through projects making a positive contribution to the individual and collective lives of all Californians.

